

THE AUTHORIZED VERSION OF THE BIBLE
AND ITS INFLUENCE

ALBERT S. COOK

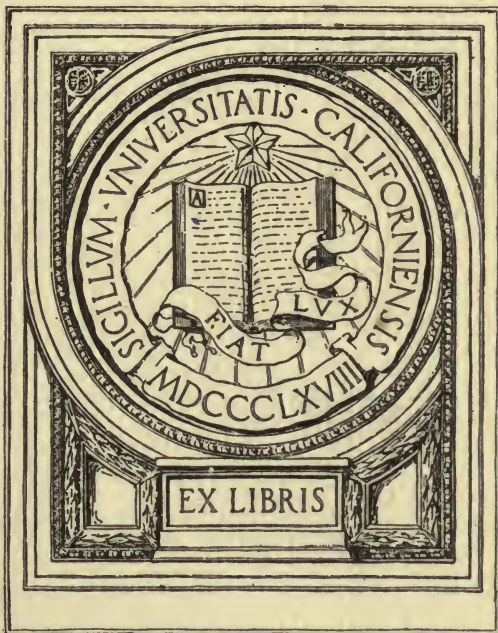
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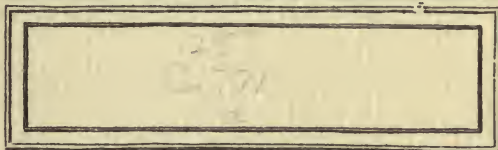
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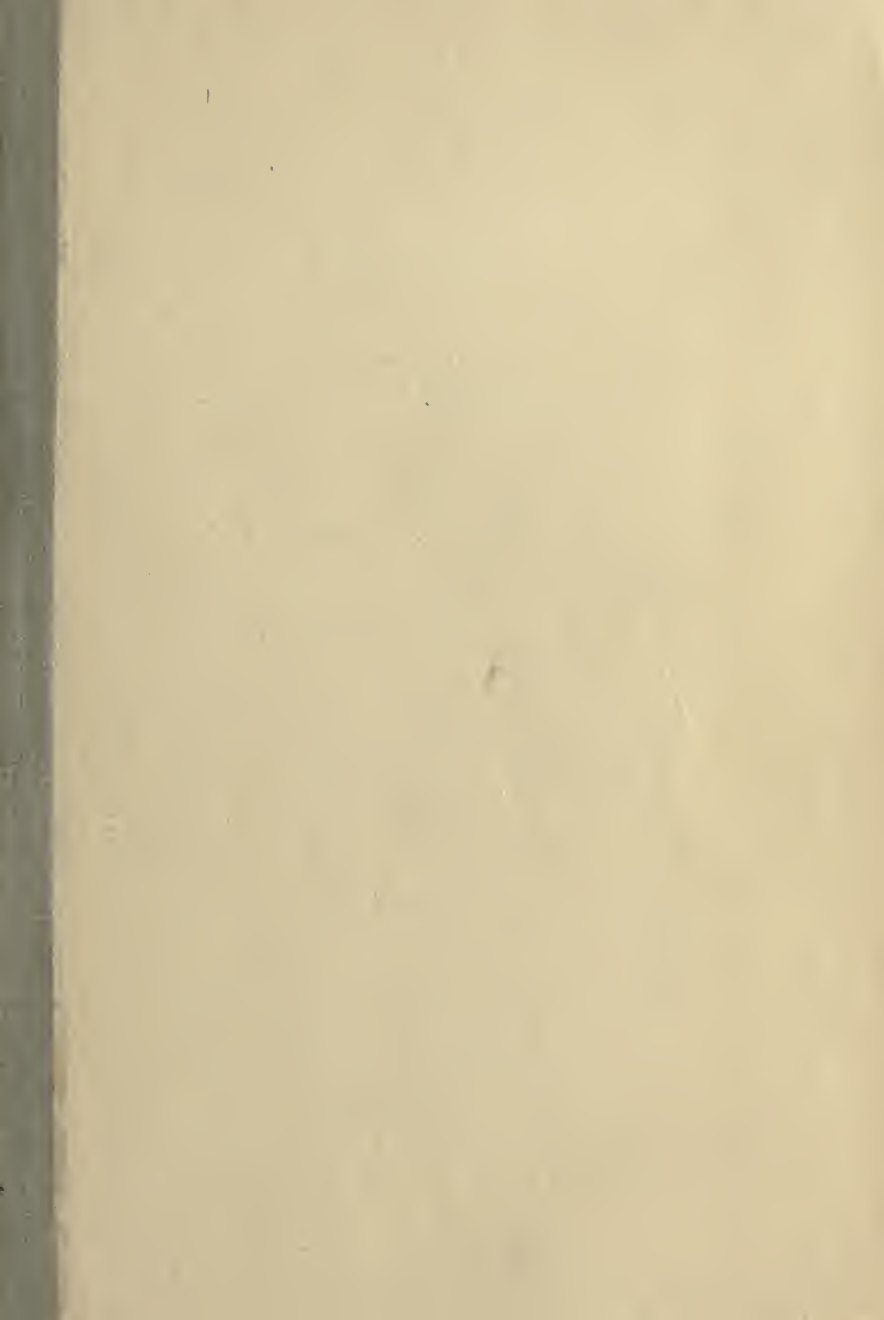
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The Authorized Version of the Bible and its Influence

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PREFATORY NOTE

THIS essay was originally written as a chapter for Volume IV of *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, and is here reprinted by the kind permission of the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press. A few trifling changes have been made, and certain passages, retrenched by the editors from my manuscript, in order to adapt it to the limits of the assigned space, are here restored.

GREENSBORO, VERMONT,
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The Authorized Version of the Bible and its Influence

IF the Authorized Version^{*} of the Bible is the first English classic, as seems by all competent authorities to be allowed, two inquiries suggest themselves—first, what is meant when it is called a classic, and, secondly, what are the qualities that entitle it to be ranked as the first classic in English? In other words, it will be necessary first to examine the

^{*} Notwithstanding the current use of this term, the Jacobean revision was never publicly authorized by Parliament or Convocation, Privy Council or King. The acceptance which it has enjoyed has been won chiefly on its merits.

Bible as literature, irrespective of any translation whatever ; and, secondly, to examine its diction in the standard English translation, in order to see whether the choice of words, the mold of sentences, and the harmonious disposition of sounds, are such as deserve the highest praise in comparison with the choicest productions of native English genius.

These two inquiries, however—the one into the nature of the Bible considered as literature, and the other into the nature of the English in which our standard version is written—will of necessity imply some consideration of the successive stages by which what we call the Bible grew into being, and of the successive stages by which the English of our Bible was gradually selected, imbued with the proper meanings and associations, and ordered into a fit medium for the conveyance of the high thoughts and

noble emotions in which the original abounds. Especially is it true of our second inquiry that no adequate conception of the language employed in the Jacobean version can be formed, save through at least a brief survey of the series of English translations which led up to it. Their indebtedness to their predecessors is recognized most clearly by the translators of the Authorized Version, who say in their preface :

Truly, good Christian reader, we never thought, from the beginning, that we should need to make a new translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one ; . . . but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones one principal good one, not justly to be excepted against—that hath been our endeavor, that our mark.

The Bible either proceeds from divine inspiration, as some will have it, or, according to others, is the fruit of the

4 Character of the Bible

religious genius of the Hebrew race. From either point of view, the authors are highly gifted individuals, who, notwithstanding their diversities, and the progressiveness observable in their representations of the nature of God, are wonderfully consistent in the main tenor of their writings, and serve, in general, for mutual confirmation and illustration. In some cases this may be due to the revision of earlier productions by later writers, which has thus brought more primitive conceptions into a degree of conformity with maturer and profounder views ; but, even in such cases, the earlier conception often lends itself, without wrenching, to the deeper interpretation and the completer exposition.

The Bible is not distinctively an intellectual achievement. Like all other great works of literature, it springs from, and addresses, human nature as a whole.

It has no more to do with intellect than with sensibility, imagination, or will. In fact, if it be more concerned with one of these faculties than another, sensibility, the sphere of the emotions, is the one that has pre-eminence over the rest.

The character of the Bible as a whole is best understood by regarding the Old Testament as its representative, and devoting attention primarily to that. It is the Hebraic temper, and the achievements of the Hebrew genius, that give the Bible a unique place among books ; and these racial traits were much less subject to modification by alien influences—such as that of Greek culture—in the period covered by the Old Testament than during the epoch in which the composition of the New Testament was effected. Much of the difficulty, for example, encountered in the adequate rendering of St. Paul's epistles into

another tongue is due to elements in his writing which are not common to him and the writers of the Old Testament, but belong specifically to him as one who had received a tincture of Greek learning, which, in modifying his thought, had also modified his speech. The tone of the Bible, then, is given to it by the Old Testament, which therefore may be considered as the type of the whole.

Its themes are the greatest that literature can treat. They may be reduced to three—God, man, and the physical universe. The physical universe is regarded as subordinate and even subject to man, within the measure of his capacity and needs, while man in his turn is subject to God. The visible creation reveals the wisdom, power, and skill of its Maker. Man's constitution being related to that of the world about him, he finds in the

latter provision for his physical wants, and a certain satisfaction, falling, however, short of the highest, for his spiritual cravings. The relations of one human being to another, and of all spiritual existences among themselves, are partly matters of positive ordinance, and partly to be inferred from their relations to God. Thus, if God is the Father of all, all men are brethren. God is represented as desiring to draw man into closer and closer union with Himself, or as restoring man to his original condition of friend and trustful child. Such eventual and complete restoration is to be effected through the agency of the Hebrew people, but particularly of certain leaders—patriarchs, prophets, and others—who accordingly are made the subjects of more or less extended biographies.

Speaking generally, the three species of literature in the Old Testament, succeed-

ing one another in the order of time,¹ are : narrative, poetry — chiefly lyrical — and prophecy. In the New Testament, the epistles may be said to represent prophecy, and the Revelation to be partly of a prophetic, and partly of a poetical, character, so far as these two can be distinguished.

Narrative, then, comes first in order of time, as in order of books. It deals with the early history of mankind, and the great epochs, especially the earlier, in the history of the Hebrew race. As suggested above, it delineates history largely under the form of biography, its most universally interesting form, and these biographies are full of ups and downs, of lights and shadows, both in characters and events. Conceived as affecting the ultimate destinies of all

¹ From another point of view, poetry precedes the other two. The matter of chronology is one which does not admit of exact determination.

mankind, and indeed of every individual soul, these lives, presented in bold and picturesque outlines, are among the most enthralling of stories.

Next in order to the narrative books, thus filled with matter of deepest import and overwhelming interest to the race, come the poetic books, of which the Psalter is the chief. Some of the Psalms are founded upon chapters of the national history, and all presuppose an acquaintance with the national religion. In turn, the Psalms of an earlier period are subject to reworking at a later epoch, in order to express more perfectly the sentiments of the individual or the religious community. The same staple of matter thus reappears in a variety of forms, all of them charged with sincerity, fervor, or even passion.

The prophetic books form the third main division. After story and song come

monition and reproof, mingled with predictions of a better time. The prophet has much in common with the poet, but is more didactic, and is concerned with the national life rather than with the individual. Like the poet, the prophet rehearses or alludes to God's dealings with His people, so that continuity of motive is maintained throughout. A projection into the future opens up occasional vistas of limitless range and surpassing beauty, which give scope and direction to such hopes as men are prone to conceive for themselves or their descendants.

x {The first condition of great literature is a unity of theme and concept that shall give coherence and organization to all detail, however varied. By this test the Bible is great literature. One increasing purpose runs through the whole,

and is reflected in the widening and deepening thought of the writers; yet it is a purpose which exists germinally at the beginning, and unfolds like a bud. Thus all the principal books are linked and even welded together, and to the common consciousness form, as it were, but a single book—rather *τὸ βιβλίον* than *τὰ βιβλία*.

✕ By far the greater part of the books which the world has agreed to call classic—that is, permanently enjoyable and permanently helpful—are marked by dignity of theme and earnestness of treatment. The theme or themes of the Bible are of the utmost comprehensiveness, depth, and poignancy of appeal. In the treatment there is nowhere a trace of levity or insincerity to be detected. The heart of a man is felt to be pulsating behind every line. There is no straining for effect, no obtrusive ornament, no complacent parading of the devices of art.

Great matters are presented with warmth of sentiment, 'in a simple style ; and nothing is more likely to render literature enduring.

Another trait of good literature exemplified by the Bible is breadth. Take, for example, the story of Jacob, the parable of the Prodigal Son, or St. Paul's speech on Mars' hill. Only the essentials are given. There is no petty and befogging detail. The characters, the events, or the arguments, stand out with clearness, even with boldness. An inclusive and central effect is produced with a few masterly strokes, so that the resulting impression is one of conciseness and economy.

Closely associated with this quality of breadth is that of vigor. The authors of the Bible have no time nor mind to spend upon the elaboration of curiosities, or upon minute and trifling points.

Every sentence, nay, every word, must count. The spirit which animates the whole must inform every particle. There is no room for delicate shadings; the issues are too momentous, the concerns too pressing, to admit of introducing anything that can be spared. A volume is compressed into a page, a page into a line.

And God said, Let there be light, and there was light.

Jesus wept.

It would not be difficult to show how all these qualities flow necessarily from the intense preoccupation of the Biblical authors with matters affecting all they held dear, all their hopes and fears with respect to their country, their family, and themselves, at the present and in a boundless future. Even when the phrases employed seem cool and measured, they

represent a compressed energy like that of a tightly coiled spring, tending to actuate effort and struggle of many kinds, and to open out into arts and civilizations of which the Hebrew never dreamed.

In a sense, then, it is the lyrical faculty that distinguishes the Hebrew author. Yet he is not an Æolian harp, delicately responsive to every zephyr of sentiment. His passions are few and elemental, and, as we have seen, are prone to utter themselves energetically. One is tempted to compare the Great Lyric, as it has been called, of the Hebrew, with the effusions, or rather the creations, of Sappho and Pindar. Yet Sappho and Pindar must suffer in the comparison. Addison speaks of Horace and Pindar as showing, when confronted with the Psalms, 'an absurdity and confusion of style,' and 'a comparative poverty of imagination.' As for Sappho, her longest extant production, while

intense, shows, in conjunction with the shorter fragments, that her deeper emotion is limited in range, and, because of this limitation, and the tropical fervor displayed, is less universal in its appeal than the best lyrical outpourings of the Hebrew genius. These include not only the Psalms, but much of Job, the best of the prophets, a good deal of the Apocalypse, occasional passages of St. Paul, and even parts of the narrative books, especially those which report the utterances of notable persons.

It has been asserted that the Hebrews of the Old Testament were incapable of producing either drama or fiction, and, one might add, the leisurely developments of the epic. This is only another way of affirming their lyrical intensity and preoccupation. The destruction of Sennacherib's host is related with exultation, and the historian of Exodus rejoices

over the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea. He is no more dispassionate than Tacitus in excoriating Nero, or Joinville in his devotion to St. Louis. Events are never displayed in that 'dry light,' so dear, as they supposed, to Heraclitus and Francis Bacon. Always there are postulates which nothing could induce the writer to discard. There is always a presumption in favor of monotheism, of God's protecting or punitive care for the people of Israel, of their eventual deliverance and full entrance upon their divinely ordained mission. The poet or prophet could never be brought to admit that there might be gods many, nor that the Hebrew people were not foreordained to pre-eminence over Philistines and Assyrians.

But this egoism, this racial pride, which manifest themselves by a strong coloring and a decided tone, and which are at the

furthest possible remove from scientific indifferentism, do not prevent the Bible from possessing a universality which has placed it at the foundation, or the head, or both, of all modern literatures. There are several reasons for this. Every one is interested in the origin of the world and of man. It may be warrantably urged that no other literature gives so plain and coherent an account of these origins, and of the early history of mankind, as the book of Genesis. Next, the Bible emphasizes the conception that all nations are of one blood, and that all men are brethren, since their Father is one. This, in satisfying the social instinct, has tended more and more to draw tribe to tribe, and kingdom to kingdom, as well as individual to individual, and, indirectly, has appealed to national and personal ambition. Thirdly, the morality of the Bible, even where it takes the

form of statutory enactments, keeps in view the interests of individual happiness and social well-being. Fourthly, the Hebrew race is presented as in some sort the prototype, or the beneficent elder brother, of all other races and nationalities, so that any of its experiences are likely to find a parallel in subsequent history, or even to help in making subsequent history. Fifthly, the future of mankind is regarded in the Bible as bound up with the general acceptance of Hebrew principles and ideals. Sixthly, the utmost fulness of individual life is represented as conditional upon the acceptance of that God who first distinctly revealed Himself to the Hebrews, upon obedience to Him, and upon spiritual union with Him. With this is associated the Messianic hope of a Deliverer, who, greater than His brethren, yet even as they, should serve to bring God

down to man, and lift man up to God. These, perhaps, are reasons enough why, notwithstanding the lyric note which is everywhere heard throughout the Bible, it possesses also a character of universality, and, one might also say, of impersonality. Thus, the Psalter, the most lyrical part of the Bible, is perhaps the widest in its appeal of any, simply because the cry of the individual believer, however impassioned, finds an echo in every other believing soul, and is not without some response from even the most apathetic.

As to form, in the sense of order and proportion, it is often assumed that the Greeks alone possessed its secret in antiquity, and bequeathed some hint of it to the modern world. Perhaps, in an endeavor to vindicate for the Hebrews a sense of form, we may best appeal to authority ; and if so, we can hardly

20 Proportion, Measure, Taste

decline to accept the judgment of a man who, classically educated, and possessed of a Frenchman's love of order and beauty, was a Semitic scholar of unusual scope and insight. It was Renan who said :

Israel had, like Greece, the gift of disengaging its idea perfectly, and of expressing it in a concise and finished outline ; proportion, measure, taste, were, in the Orient, the exclusive privilege of the Hebrew people, and because of this they succeeded in imparting to thought and feeling a form general and acceptable to all mankind.

It is true that, if we regard the technicalities of literary construction, a book of the Bible will not infrequently seem to fall short ; but this is because the author is not intent upon structure of a patent and easily definable sort. If he secures unity of impression with variety in detail, it is often by the use of other means, and especially through an intrinsic and en-

thralling power which pervades his whole composition. Structure in the more usual sense is, however, to be found in limited portions, such as the story of Joseph, a single prophecy, or a speech from the Acts of the Apostles.

An attempt has been made above to show what there is in the constitution and qualities of the Bible entitling it to be called a classic. In what follows, the aim will be to consider the process by which it became an *English* classic, and the influence it has exerted, and continues to exert, in that capacity. Before attempting this directly, however, we shall need briefly to examine the problem which it presents to the translator.

The nature of the Hebrew language first demands consideration. Its most noticeable feature is its deficiency in abstract and general terms. It has no

philosophical or scientific vocabulary. Nearly every word presents a concrete meaning, clearly visible even through a figurative use. Many of its roots are palpably verbal, and the physical activity underlying each word is felt through all its special applications. Thus, to take a single example, there is a Hebrew word variously rendered in the following passages by *bud*, *east*, *spring*, *outgoing*, *going out*.

Job 38. 27 : To cause the *bud* of the tender herb to spring forth.

Psalms 75. 6 : For promotion cometh neither from the *east* nor from the west.

2 Kings 2. 21 : And he went forth unto the *spring* of the waters.

Psalms 65. 8 : Thou makest the *outgoings* of the morning and evening to rejoice.

2 Sam. 3. 25 : Thou knowest . . . that he came to deceive thee, and to know thy *going out* and thy coming in, and to know all that thou doest.

In every one of these cases the Hebrew word means 'going out' or 'going forth,' and the Hebrew so understands it; but the 'going forth' of the sun is one thing, and that of the waters another. Now, if we could suppose the word 'bud' or 'east' in English to present to the imagination, as transparently as does 'spring,' the original activity which the word records, we should better understand what is true of practically all Hebrew words. Everywhere we are face to face with motion, activity, life. Of the Hebrew words for pride, one presents the notion of mounting up, one of strutting, and one of seething, as a boiling pot. What fundamental idea of similar concreteness does the English word 'pride' suggest?

There were not many abstract ideas to be conveyed in Biblical Hebrew; the absence of the words is a sign of the

absence of the ideas. Such a sentence as 'The problem of external perception is a problem in metaphysics,' or 'The modifications produced within our nervous system are the only states of which we can have a direct consciousness,' would be untranslatable into ancient Hebrew. It is hardly too much to say that every generalization—or, better, every general truth—expressed by the Hebrew is rendered with the utmost directness, and in phraseology as pictorial, as elemental, as transparent, as stimulative to imagination and feeling, as could possibly be.

Such a language is the very language of poetry. The medium through which poetry works is the world of sensible objects—wine and oil, the cedar of Lebanon, the young lion, the moon, the cloud, the smoking hills, the wild goat, the coney, and the stork; or, if we turn to Homer rather than the Psalmist, a

plane-tree, the bright water of a spring, a snake blood-red on the back, the cheeping brood of a sparrow, or beaked ships and well greaved Achaians. What is necessary in order to make poetry out of such materials is intensity of feeling, with elevation and coherence of thought. These, we have seen, were the endowment of the Hebrews. On the one hand, they were close to nature ; they had not parceled out their human constitution into separate and independent faculties ; they had not interposed a cloud and hubbub of words between themselves and things ; they had not so dissipated their powers in minute and laborious analysis that they were incapable of naïve views, powerful sensations, and vigorous convictions. On the other hand, they had, as tending to coherence and elevation of thought, what to them was a sufficient explanation of all the wonders

of the universe, and a sufficient impulse to lift up their hearts: these they found in their overmastering belief in God the Creator, God the Maintainer, and, for those who trust and love Him, God the Deliverer.

But not only were their words concrete, the structure of their sentences was simple, while of the paragraph, in the Greek sense, they had hardly any conception, until, in the New Testament, we find their diction fallen under Greek influence. Their chief connective was 'and'; hence the periodic sentence was virtually beyond their scope. The verse was their stylistic unit; and a sequence of verses—or of sentences about the length of what we understand by the average Biblical verse—was all that they aimed at achieving in composition.

Their poetry was measured, not by feet, as in ancient Latin and Greek, but

by word-accents, as in the most ancient poetry of many nations, including that of our English ancestors. Moreover, Hebrew poetry was dominated by the principle of parallelism of members. Often these members are arranged in couplets, but sometimes they include several lines. The three primary forms of parallelism are the synonymous, the synthetic, and the antithetic. Thus, synonymous :

Psalms 15. 1 : (a) Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? (b) who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

Synthetic (a succeeding line or lines supplementing or completing the first) :

Psalms 14. 2 : (a) The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, (b) to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.

Antithetic :

Prov. 10. 1 : (a) A wise son maketh a glad

father, (*b*) but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.

Besides these, there are variations, such as climactic parallelism, where an expression in the first line is repeated in one or more that follow :

Psalms 24. 8 : (*a*) The Lord strong and mighty,
(*b*) the Lord mighty in battle.

The formation of the strophe, and devices such as the refrain, are less important. What is chiefly to be noted is, first, that Hebrew poetry has a decided accentual rhythm, and, secondly, that the dominant principle in the union of lines into larger groups is that of parallelism. The controlling rhythm is therefore the rhythm of meaning, what Watts-Dunton has called 'sense-rhythm,' this being, as he observes, the rhythm of nature. Stanley eloquently says :

'The rapid stroke as of alternate wings,' 'the

heaving and sinking as of the troubled heart,' which have been beautifully described as the essence of the parallel structure of Hebrew verse, are exactly suited for the endless play of human feeling, and for the understanding of every age and nation.

Much of Hebrew prose was poetical, in the sense that it employed these devices to a greater or less extent; and all of it was poetical in the sense described above in the discussion of the Hebrew vocabulary. The prophets, in particular, frequently rise into a strain which is hardly distinguishable from poetry.

The qualities, then, which fitted the Bible, beyond any other book of the world, for translation, are, among others, these :

✕ (a) Universality of interest. There is much in it for the meanest and most illiterate, and its treasures are not to be exhausted by the wisest. It touches

30 Concreteness, Simplicity, Rhythm

every person at more points than any other book that can be named.

(b) The concreteness and picturesqueness of its language, appealing alike to the child and the poet, while suggesting abundant reflection to the philosopher.

(c) The simplicity of its structure, which requires little more from the translator than that he shall render with fidelity one brief clause at a time, and follow it by the next.

(d) A rhythm largely independent of the features, prosodical or other, of any individual language—a rhythm free, varied, and indeterminate, or, rather, determinate only by what has been called 'the energy of the spirit which sings within the bosom of him who speaks,' and therefore adaptable to every emotion, from the most delicate to the most energetic.

It follows that the sway of the original is so powerful that hardly any translation will be devoid of merit, while infinite room is still left for felicities of detail, according to the character of the medium, and the skill and taste of the translator.

Among the qualifications of a good translator, the first undoubtedly is that he shall be penetrated by a sense of the surpassing value of his original, and by a corresponding sense of the importance of his task. This will preserve him from flippancy and meanness, by imbuing him with earnestness and humility. It will make him ready to follow wherever he is led by the text, and will prevent him from pluming himself upon prettiness of phrase, or any fancies of his own. Such a translator will strive with all his might after fidelity to word and sense, and after the utmost clearness and simplicity

of rendering, avoiding on the one hand the trivial, and on the other the ornate or pompous. He will conform to the genius of his own tongue, while endeavoring to transfer to it the treasures of another ; and, besides possessing naturally, he will cultivate in every proper way, a sensitiveness to that music of the phrase which in the case of the Bible is but another name for the music of the heart. Only a few translators have united these endowments in a just proportion, but among them must be counted Jerome, the first of the great translators whom we know by name, the author—though he called himself rather the reviser—of the Latin Vulgate.

Of Jerome's fitness for his task the following illustration will serve. It is worthy of attention, moreover, as presenting the verses contained in the various English specimens which will follow :

Exod. 19. 16, 18, 19: *Jamque advenerat tertius dies, et mane inclaruerat, et ecce cæperunt audiri tonitrua, et micare fulgura, et nubes densissima operire montem, clangorque buccinæ vehementius perstrepebat, et timuit populus qui erat in castris. . . . Totus autem mons Sinai fumabat, eo quod descendisset Dominus super eum in igne, et ascenderet fumus ex eo quasi de fornace; eratque omnis mons terribilis. Et sonitus buccinæ paulatim crescebat in majus, et prolixius tendebatur.*

The language into which the Bible can be most perfectly rendered will, in the first place, be popular, in distinction from artificial or scholastic. Its vocabulary will consist of such words as ordinary people would naturally use to describe objects, or utter their emotions. It will abound in concrete expressions, and need but few learned or recondite terms. The words should, if possible, exhibit their primitive meaning on their face, or, at least, suggest immediately a single central

meaning which can be accepted as radical and primary. They must, in general, while racy and vernacular, be free from degrading or belittling associations, so that they may be equally suitable for the middle or ordinary style and for passages of any degree of elevation up to the highest. A considerable proportion of them must possess sonority, or contain such admixtures of vowels and musical consonants as will insure, according to the need, a scale of melodious effects ranging from serene and quiet harmonies to rich and rolling *crescendos*—but all without appearance of effort, instinctively responsive to the situation, and to the feeling which the situation evokes. If the rhythmical effects of a language are attained through the alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables, such a language will so far resemble the Hebrew, and serve as a natural medium

for the transmission of the original effects.

The influences which molded the English language into a proper vehicle for so stupendous a literary creation as the Bible must next be briefly considered. Early in the eighth century, Bede was making a translation into Old English of the Gospel of John, and about the year 800 A.D. the language was already capable of such poetry as this from the *Christ* of Cynewulf¹:

Thereupon from the four corners of the world,
from the uttermost regions of earth, angels
all-shining shall with one accord blow their
crashing trumpets; the earth shall tremble under
men. Glorious and steadfast they shall sound
together over against the course of the stars,
chanting in harmony and making melody from
south and from north, from east and from west,
throughout the whole creation. All mankind
shall they wake from the dead unto the Last

¹ Ll. 878-889, Whitman's translation.

Judgment ; they shall rouse the sons of men all aghast from the ancient earth, bidding them straightway arise from their deep sleep.

Throughout the Old English period, most of the literature produced was strongly colored by Biblical diction. Even a work like Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* was under this influence. By about the year 1000, the language was able to render the Latin of Jerome, as given above, in the following form¹ (Exod. 19. 16, 18, 19) :

þā cōm se þrydda dæg, and ligetta and þunor and þicce genip oferwrēh þone munt, and bȳman swēg wæs gehīred, and eall þæt folc him ondrēd þe wæs on þām fyrdwīcon. . . . And eall Sinai munt smēac, forþamþe Drihten wæs uppan him on fȳre; and se smīc ārās of him, and eall se munt

¹ The vowel-sounds of either Italian, French, or German will be sufficiently close. The characters *ð* and *þ* represent *th*; *g* before or after *e* or *i* is usually like *γ*. Final *e* is pronounced somewhat like that in *liveth*, or the final *e* of German. The macron indicates length of vowel.

wæs egeslic. And þære býman swēg wēox swā
leng swā swīðor.¹

Before we leave this part of the subject, it may be added that, according to the computations of Marsh, about 93 per cent of the words of the Authorized Version, counting repetitions of the same word, are native English.

The *Ormulum* and *Piers Plowman* will suggest the influence exerted by the Bible on English diction during the period between A.D. 1000 and 1400—roughly speaking, between the age of Ælfric and that of Wyclif. The poetry near the end of this period is better able than prose to cope with the difficulties of translation. Thus, Chaucer has:²

Caste alle away the werkes of derknesse,
And armeth you in armure of brightnesse ;

¹ Ælfric's versions of the same passage may be found in his *Homilies*, ed. Thorpe, 1. 312; 2. 196, 202.

² *Second Nun's Tale* 384-5.

where the second Wyclifite version reads :

Rom. 13. 12: Therfor caste we awei the werkis of derknessis, and be we clothid in the armeris of list.

Though this second version, that of Purvey (1388), is in general much less pedantically literal than the first, made some eight or nine years earlier, yet such words as *derknessis* and *armeris*, for the Latin plurals *tenebræ* and *arma*, illustrate the chief defect of both the Wyclifite translations, namely a failure to attain perfect English idiom.

Purvey seems to have been quite conscious of the excessive literalness of the earlier version (1380), and of the awkwardness due to the close following of Latin idiom. In his prologue, after describing how he had toiled, in association with others, to obtain a true Latin text, and to elucidate its difficulties, he proceeds to

lay down important principles of Biblical translation which have never been superseded. Among them are :

First, to translate as clearly as possible according to the sense, and not merely according to the words.

Secondly, to make the sentence at least as 'open' in English as in Latin, that is, to have due regard to English idiom.

Nevertheless, it may be affirmed that both the Wyclifite versions are far inferior in ease and idiomatic character to the Old English. It cannot be said that scholars are agreed as to the influence of the Wyclifite versions upon Tindale and the Authorized Version ; but it is pretty clear that Tindale was influenced by them to a moderate extent, and that expressions of great force and beauty have occasionally been appropriated from Wyclif by the Authorized Version, either mediately or directly.

One or two instances may suffice : John 4. 14, 'a well of water springing up into everlasting life' comes, through Tindale, from both the Wyclifite versions ; 1 Cor. 2. 10, 'the deep things of God,' which Tindale renders, 'the bottom of God's secrets,' and the Rheims version, 'the profundities of God.' How easy it is to go stylistically astray in such matters is shown by the fact that two versions, both published within the last ten years, have, respectively, for the first passage above, 'a spring of water . . . welling up for enduring life,' and 'a fountain . . . of water springing up for the Life of the ages' ; and, for the second, 'the profoundest secrets of God,' and 'the depths of the divine nature.'

The Wyclifite version of Exod. 19. 16, 18, 19 is subjoined, the spelling being modernized, and modern renderings being indicated :

WYCLIF (earlier)

And now the third day was come, and the morning [*morewe*, morrow] tide was full cleared ; and lo ! thunders began to be heard and lightnings [*leytes*, from the Old English word above] to shine, and the most thick cloud to cover the hill ; and the cry of the trump more hideously made noise, and the people dreaded that was in the tents. . . . And all the hill of Sinai smoked, because [*for thi that*] the Lord descended upon it in fire ; and the smoke rose [*steyde*] up of it as of a furnace, and all the hill was full fearful ; and the sound of the trump little by little [*litil mele*, 'littlemeal,' like piecemeal] sprang into more, and longer was stretched.

A hundred years later than the Wyclifite versions (November 20, 1483), Caxton published his *Golden Legend*, in which he had inserted considerable portions of the Pentateuch and the Gospels, on the basis, probably, of Peter Comestor's *Historia Scholastica*. Caxton's theory of translation, if we may judge from the

preface to his *Eneydos*, was to seek a mean between 'fair and strange terms,' by some regarded as 'over curious,' and such 'old and homely terms' as were now strange and almost disused. His aim lay in the wish to be generally understood. The clearness and beauty of the passage from Exodus will be readily seen :

CAXTON'S *Golden Legend* (spelling modernized).

When the third day came, and the morning waxed clear, they heard thunder and lightning, and saw a great cloud cover the mount ; and the cry of the trump was so shrill that the people were sore afraid. . . . All the mount of Sinai smoked, for so much as our Lord descended on it in fire ; and the smoke ascended from the hill as it had been from a furnace. The mount was terrible and dreadful, and the sound of the trump grew a little more, and continued longer.

It will be evident that the vocabulary of Caxton is drawn from the same source as Tindale's, while it does not greatly

differ from Wyclif's, these sources being native English and Old French, with a very slight admixture of words coming directly from the Latin.

✓ It is agreed on all hands that the English of the Authorized Version is, in essentials, that of Tindale. Minor modifications were made by translators and revisers for the next eighty years or so ; but, speaking broadly, the Authorized Version is Tindale's. The spirit of the man passed into his work, and therefore it is of moment to ascertain what that spirit was. He himself may tell us :

(a) His version was to be made for all the people, even the humblest :

If God spare me life, ere many years I will cause the boy that driveth the plow to know more of the Scriptures than you [a theologian] do.

To the same effect is his preference of *favor* to *grace*, *love* to *charity*, *health* to *salvation*.

(*b*) His surrender of himself to God. Writing to a friend and fellow-laborer, Frith, he says :

The wisdom and the spirit of Stephen be with your heart and with your mouth, and teach your lips what they shall say, and how to answer to all things. He is our God if we despair in ourselves, and trust in him ; and his is the glory. Amen.

(*c*) His theory regarding the meaning to be conveyed :

Believing that every part of Scripture had one sense and one only, the sense in the mind of the writer.

(*d*) On Greek and Hebrew with reference to English :

The Greek tongue agreeth more with the English than with the Latin. And the properties of the Hebrew tongue agreeth a thousand times more with the English than with the Latin. The manner of speaking is both one, so that in a thousand places thou needest not but to trans-

late it into the English word for word, when thou must seek a compass in the Latin, and yet shalt have much work to translate it well-favoredly, so that it have the same grace and sweetness, sense and pure understanding, with it in the Latin as it hath in the Hebrew. A thousand parts better may it be translated into the English than into the Latin.

(e) His scrupulous fidelity :

I call God to record, against the day we shall appear before our Lord Jesus Christ to give reckoning of our doings, that I never altered one syllable of God's word against my conscience, nor would to this day, if all that is in earth—whether it be honor, pleasure, or riches—might be given me.

The observation of Augustus Hare, in speaking of the Jacobean revisers, is applicable to Tindale: 'They were far more studious of the matter than of the manner ; and there is no surer preservative against writing ill, or more potent

charm for writing well.' And so Goldsmith : ' To feel your subject thoroughly, and to speak without fear, are the only rules of eloquence.' Elsewhere Goldsmith says : ' Eloquence is not in the words, but in the subject ; and in great concerns, the more simply anything is expressed, it is generally the more sublime.'

(f) His humility :

And if they perceive in any places that I have not attained the very sense of the tongue, or meaning of the Scripture, or have not given the right English word, that they put to their hand to amend it, remembering that so is their duty to do.

Again, he speaks of himself as ' evil-favored in this world, and without grace in the sight of men, speechless and rude, dull and slow-witted.'

If we add that he was an assiduous and minute student, went directly to the originals, and employed the best helps

attainable, all that is needful will have been said.

TINDALE.

And the third day in the morning there was thunder and lightning, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the horn waxed exceeding loud, and all the people that was in the host was afraid. . . . And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended down upon it in fire ; and the smoke thereof ascended up, as it had been the smoke of a kiln, and all the mount was exceeding fearful. And the voice of the horn blew, and waxed louder and louder.

Before we pass from Tindale to the Authorized Version, three other translations must be mentioned. Coverdale's nature may be indicated by the fact that it is he who introduced into the language the expressions 'loving kindness' and 'tender mercy.' Tindale's nature was masculine, Coverdale's of a more feminine

cast. His translations—of which the Prayer Book¹ version of the Psalter is the most generally known—possess a more flexible and musical rhythm than Tindale's. Tindale wrote (Luke 2. 12): 'And take this for a sign; ye shall find the child swaddled, and laid in a manger.' When this has passed under Coverdale's revising hand, it stands: 'And take this for a sign: ye shall find the child wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger.' Westcott has truly said of Coverdale that

¹ The Prayer Book excels in the music of its phrasing. One of Cranmer's collects, that for the first Sunday in Advent, will serve as a specimen (*c.* A.D. 1546): 'Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which Thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when He shall come again in His glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through Him who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever.'

Coverdale has been regarded by some as the originator of the tendency to translate the same word in different ways at different times; but this tendency existed as far back as the Old English period.

he 'allowed himself considerable freedom in dealing with the shape of the original sentences. . . . There is in every part an endeavor to transfuse the spirit as well as the letter into the English rendering.'

A peculiarity of the Genevan version is that it attains a special accuracy, sometimes at the expense of literalness. One example will suffice. Tindale translates Luke II. 17 : 'One house shall fall upon another.' The Geneva Bible has : 'A house divided against itself, falleth.'

The Rheims and Douay versions inclined to Latinize, whereas earlier versions had sought to employ simpler words, generally of native origin. Thus, Tindale had written (Rom. 10. 10) : 'To knowledge [*i.e.* acknowledge] with the mouth maketh a man safe.' The Rheims version has : 'With the mouth confession is made to salvation'; the second Wyclifite version had rendered the same Latin by :

50 Authorized Version Selective

‘By mouth knowledging is made to health.’

The translators of the Authorized Version endeavored, out of the English renderings with which they were acquainted, compared with the originals and the principal versions into other tongues, ancient and modern, to frame one which should surpass them all by appropriating the chief excellences of each—so far, at least, as these excellences could be harmonized with one another. In so far as it did thus reconcile pre-existing differences, it became a powerful agent in establishing unity throughout the English nation, for, to borrow the words of the historian Gardiner : ‘In its production all sectarian influences were banished, and all hostilities were mute.’ Whereas previously one Bible had been read in church, and another at home, now all parties and classes turned with one

accord to the new version, and adopted it as their very own. It thus became bound up with the life of the nation. Since it stilled all controversy over the best rendering, it gradually came to be accepted as so far absolute that in the minds of myriads there was no distinction between this version and the original texts, and they may almost be said to have believed in the literal inspiration of the very words which composed it.

It must not be overlooked that the Authorized Version profited by all the controversy regarding previous translations. Practically every word that could be challenged had been challenged. The fate of a doctrine, even the fate of a party, had at times seemed to depend upon a phrase. The whole ground had been fought over so long that great intimacy with the Bible had resulted. Not only did the mind take cognizance of it,

but the emotions seized upon it; much of it was literally learned by heart by great numbers of the English people. Thus it grew to be a national possession; and literature which is a national possession, and by its very nature appeals to the poor and lowly, is in truth a national classic. No other book has so penetrated and permeated the hearts and speech of the English race as has the Bible. What Homer was to the Greeks, and the Koran to the Arabs, that, or something not unlike it, the Bible has become to the English. Huxley writes :

Consider the great historical fact that for three centuries this book has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history ; that it has become the national epic of Britain, and is as familiar to noble and simple, from John-o'-Groat's House to Land's End, as Dante and Tasso once were to the Italians ; that it is written in the noblest and purest English,

and abounds in exquisite beauties of pure literary form ; and, finally, that it forbids the veriest hind who never left his village to be ignorant of the existence of other countries and other civilizations, and of a great past stretching back to the furthest limits of the oldest civilizations of the world.

The classical, yet popular, character of the Bible has been already insisted on. Two or three comparisons will further illustrate this. Chateaubriand, rendering the pathetic address of Ruth to Naomi in the Homeric manner, shows how prolix and comparatively languid Homer can be. It might be objected that Chateaubriand has travestied Homer, but it cannot be said that Thucydides, the consummate Greek historian, travesties himself. Compare the close of a Thucydidean speech, being about one-sixth of the harangue of Brasidas to his soldiers before their engagement

54 Comparison with Thucydides

with the Illyrians (Thuc. 4. 126), with the whole of Gideon's address to his men before their encounter with the Midianites (Judges 7. 17, 18) :

If you repel their tumultuous onset, and, when opportunity offers, withdraw again in good order, keeping your ranks, you will sooner arrive at a place of safety, and will also learn the lesson that mobs like these, if an adversary withstand their first attack, do but threaten at a distance and make a flourish of valor, although if he yields to them they are quick enough to show their courage in following at his heels when there is no danger.

Look on me, and do likewise ; and behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do. When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon.

The speech of Jahaziel (2 Chron. 20. 15-17) seems real. It is thus that an

energetic man would speak. It runs (with modernized punctuation) :

Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat. Thus saith the Lord unto you : Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's. To-morrow go ye down against them. Behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz, and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel. Ye shall not need to fight in this battle. Set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Fear not, nor be dismayed. To-morrow go out against them, for the Lord will be with you.

Coleridge was so impressed with the vigor of Biblical style as to affirm :

After reading Isaiah, or St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, Homer and Virgil are disgustingly tame to me, and Milton himself barely tolerable.

Shakespeare, by common consent, is the first name in English literature. Of

Shakespeare's prose, Churton Collins makes five classes, the last being what he calls highly wrought poetical prose. 'This,' he says, 'is the style where Shakespeare has raised prose to the sublimest pitch of verse.' As the first illustration of it he chooses *Hamlet* 2. 2. 310-321 :

That goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory ; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors. What a piece of work is a man ! how noble in reason ! how infinite in faculty ! in form and moving how express and admirable ! in action how like an angel ! in apprehension how like a god ! the beauty of the world ! the paragon of animals ! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust ? Man delights not me.

That, indeed, is fine rhetoric, but how apostrophic it is, and how repetitious ! 'Canopy'—'firmament'—'roof'—thus it

is amplified. Again, even if we can distinguish between 'noble in reason,' 'infinite in faculty,' and 'in apprehension . . . like a god,' how shall we make clear to ourselves the difference between 'moving' and 'action'? And what an anticlimax—'the paragon of animals'!

This is Shakespeare, though, to be sure, Shakespeare putting words into the mouth of a dramatic character. And now, merely as a composition, compare Psalms 8. 3-8 :

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands ; thou hast put all things under his feet : all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field ; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.

58 Shakespeare and the Bible

Does 'moon and stars' appeal less forcibly and pictorially to the imagination than 'golden fire'? Shakespeare's 'majestical roof' is unrelated to man; the 'heavens' of the Biblical passage are knit up into the same fabric with him. In the Psalm there is nothing hyperbolic. Man is not, as a matter of fact, 'infinite in faculty,' nor may we assume a universal consensus that he is, above everything else, 'the beauty of the world.' In the Psalm he is subordinated to the heavens, only to be exalted over the creatures, and when he is said to be 'a little lower than the angels,' the moderation of tone is more permanently effective than Shakespeare's 'in action how like an angel!' which seems merely a piece of somewhat hysterical exaggeration—though perhaps dramatically in keeping—to one who has formed his conception of angels from the Bible, Dante, or Milton, from the

Hermes of the ancient poets, or even from Shakespeare's own line in this same play,

And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.

Milton does not scruple to declare :
'There are no songs to be compared with the songs of Zion, no orations equal to those of the prophets.' As Sir Walter Scott drew near his beautiful and affecting end, he requested Lockhart to read to him. When asked from what book, he replied : 'Need you ask? There is but one.' To Wordsworth, 'the grand storehouses of enthusiastic and meditative imagination . . . are the prophetic and lyrical parts of the Holy Scriptures.'

Ruskin ascribed the best part of his taste in literature to his having been required by his mother to learn by heart certain chapters of the Bible, adding : 'I count [it] very confidently the most precious, and, on the whole, the one

essential part of all my education.' Carlyle said: 'In the poorest cottage . . . is one Book, wherein for several thousands of years the spirit of man has found light, and nourishment, and an interpreting response to whatever is deepest in him.'

X Newman speaks of the Scriptures as 'compositions which, even humanly considered, are among the most sublime and beautiful ever written.' Macaulay regarded the Bible as 'a book which, if everything else in our language should perish, would alone suffice to show the whole extent of its beauty and power'; and elsewhere he says of Bunyan: 'He had studied no great model of composition, with the exception—an important exception undoubtedly—of our noble translation of the Bible.' Froude speaks of its 'mingled tenderness and majesty, the Saxon simplicity, the preternatural grandeur.'

This is the testimony borne by the translators of the Revised Version of the New Testament :

We have had to study this great Version carefully and minutely, line by line ; and the longer we have been engaged upon it the more we have learned to admire its simplicity, its dignity, its power, its happy turns of expression, its general accuracy, and, we must not fail to add, the music of its cadences, and the felicities of its rhythm.

Swift writes, almost exactly a hundred years after the date of the Authorized Version : 'The translators of our Bible were masters of an English style much fitter for that work than any which we see in our present writings, which I take to be owing to the simplicity that runs through the whole' ; and again, of the changes which had been introduced into the language : 'They have taken off a great deal from that simplicity which is

one of the greatest perfections in any language.'

Hallam, though he admits that the style of the Authorized Version is 'the perfection of our English language,' has often been censured for declaring that the English of the Jacobean version 'is not the English of Daniel, or Raleigh, or Bacon'—in fact, that 'it is not the language of the reign of James I.' Yet this is strictly true, and for the reason that he assigns, namely, 'in consequence of the principle of adherence to the original versions which had been kept up since the time of Henry VIII.' It is true, in a sense, that no great writer's diction is of his age, any more than he himself is of his age. Coleridge declares of Shakespeare, 'His is not the style of the age,' just as Ben Jonson declared of the poet himself, 'He was not of an age.' Indeed,

it seems as though this were the necessary condition, at least in the case of great writers, of being 'for all time,' that one shall not be too much 'of an age.'

Great thought and great feeling draw their own appropriate diction to themselves, somewhat as the magnet attracts steel filings ; and after the appropriate diction has thus been attracted, the union between it and the substance of discourse seems to be almost indissoluble. It is as if a soul had been clothed upon with flesh. From that moment, nothing can be changed with impunity ; if you wrench away a word, it is as if a portion of the life-blood followed it. Now the time when the soul of the Bible began to take upon itself flesh for us was nearly three-quarters of a century before the work of the Jacobean revisers. But since the life-process, so to speak, did not absolutely begin with Tindale, it really

extended over a considerably longer period than that named above, especially if we consider that Wyclif was concerned in it; for if the Wyclifite versions be included, the Vulgate can hardly be ignored, so that eventually the Septuagint must be regarded as having initiated a process which the Jacobean revisers completed.

If the substance of the Bible may thus be compared to a soul which was to be fitted with a body, it will follow that the diction will differ somewhat from member to member, even as it did in the Hebrew and Greek originals; but it will also follow, in proportion to the assumed relation and interdependence of these parts or members, that this diction will have a certain homogeneity, so that a radical change in the vocabulary at any point would be likely to throw that part out of keeping with the rest. The truth of this was recognized by

Ellicott, when, in 1870, he advised future revisers to 'limit the choice of words to the vocabulary of the present [Authorized] version, combined with that of the versions, that preceded it ; and in alterations preserve as far as possible the rhythm and cadence of the Authorized Version.'

It is not a little remarkable that the effects wrought by the English Bible should require so few words. The editors of the *New English Dictionary* reckon the words in A to L, inclusive, as 160,813, of which number 113,677 are what they call main words. Shakespeare, it has been estimated, employs about 21,000 (others say 15,000, or 24,000); Milton, in his verse, about 13,000. The Hebrew (with the Chaldee) of the Old Testament, according to the computations of Leusden, comprises 5,642 words, and the New Testament, it is said, has 4,800, while the

66 Capacities of Simple Words

whole English Bible, if we may trust Marsh, employs about 6,000. Making all due allowances for the 'myriad-mindedness' of a Shakespeare, there is still room for the conclusion that the capacities of words, especially of the simpler words, are much greater than is believed by those who use a large and heterogeneous vocabulary. In this respect there is not so much difference between native English and Norman French words as is commonly supposed. In the following examples, the words *clean*, *pure*, and *clear* translate the same Greek adjective, and all seem equally expressive, or nearly so :

Rev. 15. 6 : And the seven angels came out of the temple, . . . clothed in *pure* and white linen.

Rev. 19. 8 : And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, *clean* and white.

Rev. 21. 18 : And the city was pure gold,
like unto *clear* glass.

That in this sense they are fairly interchangeable may be seen by comparing Job 15. 15, 'Yea, the heavens are not *clean* in his sight,' with Tennyson's

Make thou my spirit *pure* and *clear*
As are the frosty skies.

This brings us to the question of the influence of the Authorized Version upon subsequent English literature—an influence which cannot always be precisely distinguished from that of the Bible in some earlier form. When Spenser or Shakespeare, for instance, uses the Bible, it is of course not the Jacobean version, and now and then the same thing will be true at a later period, as in some of Milton's writing. The more important modes in which the Bible has affected English literature are these :

68 Scriptural Language Borrowed

(a) The themes are Scriptural, and the language partly, at times even largely, Scriptural. Such is the case in sermons, versified Psalms, paraphrases of Scriptural narrative, devotional essays, and the like. An excellent example is Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. This book apart, however, there are few, if any, examples of a work which has been accepted as pure literature employing Biblical diction to anything like such a degree. Other attempts, such as the *Book of Mormon*, tend to the grotesque or ludicrous, because of the disparity between the language and the ideas suggested. A diction resembling that of the Bible in its concreteness and simplicity, and in its slightly archaic character, has, however, of late been employed with good effect in prose versions from authors like Homer.

(b) Quotations from the Bible are introduced, sometimes slightly changed,

into secular writings. The object is to substantiate a statement, or to awaken a train of associations favorable to the author's purpose. These can be found in almost any author, but they are more common in the nineteenth century than earlier, being especially used by writers who have at heart the reform or elevation of society or individuals. Such are Shelley, Dickens, Carlyle, Ruskin, Tennyson, the Brownings, Jean Ingelow, and Longfellow—to mention only a few of the more obvious names.

(c) Allusions, or considerably modified quotations, are introduced freely, and may be found on the editorial page of many a newspaper. Thus, one reads :

The full measure of justice is not meted out to them.

They sold their birthright for a mess of pottage.

They have fallen among thieves.

In the last three books which the present

writer has read for amusement, he has been interested to note quotations and allusions of this nature. In one of them, a recent book on life in an Italian province, 63 references were found ; in the second, a recent work on the life of wild animals, 12; in the third, a novel by Thomas Hardy, 18. From the first :

Ah yes, she is beautiful exceedingly, the Queen among cities, the king's daughter, adorned as a bride: glorious without and within.

She spoke a broken English, compared with which the tongues of men and angels alike fell short.

Things which their fathers have told and taught them.

She wanted a tale about these 'sons of the burning coal.' [Job 5. 7], as the Hebrews called them.

From the second :

He has learned unconsciously the strength of lying still.

The little wild things would hear the low tinkle of invitation to all who were athirst, and would come swiftly to drink.

From the third :

To be . . . near her, yet unseen, was the one ewe-lamb of pleasure left to him.

I have certainly got thistles for figs, in a worldly sense.

That mother had *not* crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.

(*d*) Many phrases have grown so common that they have become part of the web of current English speech, and are hardly thought of as Biblical at all, except on deliberate reflection. For instance : 'highways and hedges'; 'clear as crystal'; 'still small voice'; 'hip and thigh'; 'arose as one man'; 'lick the dust'; 'a thorn in the flesh'; 'broken reed'; 'root of all evil'; 'the nether millstone'; 'sweat of his brow'; 'heap coals of fire'; 'a law

unto themselves'; 'the fat of the land'; 'dark sayings'; 'a soft answer'; 'a word in season'; 'moth and rust'; 'weighed in the balance and found wanting'; even such colloquialisms as, 'we are the people' (cf. Job 12. 2). Many more of these might readily be quoted.

(e) Other influences, less definitely measureable, but more important, remain to be mentioned.

Of the Bible in its relations to religion, individual conduct, and ideals political and social, this is not the place to speak; yet these affect literature to an incalculable extent, if they do not even provide its very substance. Of such matters as fall within the scope of this chapter—matters of vocabulary, grammar, idiom, and style—something may briefly be said.

In the first place, the literary influence of the Bible, like that of any classic, is distinctly conservative. The reading of

it tends to keep alive a familiarity with the words and constructions which were current when the English Bible grew up, or rather of such of these words and constructions as proved most conformable to the genius of the Hebrew and Greek employed in the sacred writings. As hinted above, this influence, in conjunction with that of the Bible in the sphere of thought and emotion, seems to have culminated, if its culmination be not rather a matter of the future, in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The result is that many terms formerly regarded as awkward, or alien to the genius of the language, are now understood and accepted. Soon after the Authorized Version was issued, Selden thus criticized the rendering :

The Bible is rather translated into English words than into English phrases. The Hebraisms are kept, and the phrase of that language is kept.

A typical Hebraism is the use of *of* in such phrases as 'oil of gladness,' 'man of sin,' 'King of kings'; but who has any difficulty with them now? In the first half of the nineteenth century, Hallam could say :

It abounds, . . . especially in the Old Testament, with obsolete phraseology, and with single words long since abandoned, or retained only in provincial use.

At present this is no truer of the Bible than of Shakespeare, if as true. Our earlier English has been so revived, and rendered so familiar, that much which needed elaborate explanation in the eighteenth century is now intelligible to every one. As Lightfoot said of other objectors :

The very words which these critics would have ejected from our English Bibles as barbarous, or uncouth, or obsolete, have again taken their

Return toward Biblical Diction 75

places in our highest poetry, and even in our popular language.

Like the course of a planet round the sun, the movement of English diction, which in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was, on the whole, away from that of the Bible, now returns with ever accelerating speed toward it. That the movement really began at a much earlier date, though inconspicuously, is shown by the counsels and practice of Swift, and by the circumstance that Challoner's Roman Catholic version of 1763-4 abandoned many of the Latinisms of the Rheims and Douay translations in favor of the simpler language of the Authorized Version.

The use of concrete words has grown in favor. The colorlessness, vagueness, and obscurity of abstract terms, and of conventional phraseology whether abstract

or not, have been discredited. Vividness, the sense of reality, have more and more prevailed in literature—that is, in non-technical writings.

Simplicity has always been recommended by the example of the Authorized Version, and, especially since the age of Wordsworth, is more and more gaining upon bombast and meretricious ornament.

The concreteness and simplicity of the Authorized Version, and its use of the homely vernacular, have steadily appealed to plain people, as distinguished from those who have had more abundant opportunities of education. But the love of the humble for the Bible is largely due to its message of cheer and hope. Huxley has even gone so far as to call the Bible 'the Magna Charta of the poor and the oppressed.' Two men, Bunyan and Lincoln, who educated themselves largely by

means of the Bible, may serve as examples of many who have become known to posterity for their inestimable services to their race. Both are famous as writers, and the best writing of both is alive with the spirit of the Bible. Bunyan has already been mentioned. Of Lincoln it has been said that he built up his entire reading upon his early study of the Bible:

 He had mastered it absolutely ; mastered it as later he mastered only one or two other books, notably Shakespeare ; mastered it so that he became almost 'a man of one book'; . . . and he left his life as part of the crowning work of the century that has just closed.

Burns and Carlyle are two other notable writers who point the same conclusion, and all illustrate Coleridge's observation :

The best and wisest of mankind, the kingly spirits of history, enthroned in the hearts of mighty nations, have declared it to be beyond compare the most perfect instrument, the only

adequate organ, of Humanity—the organ and instrument of all the gifts, powers, and tendencies by which the individual is privileged to rise above himself.

Of Walt Whitman, the American who wished to be known as the poet of democracy, it has been authoritatively said :

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The elevation and nobility of Biblical diction, assisted by its slightly archaic

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The Bible teaches that emotion should not habitually be divorced from thought, nor thought from emotion—certainly not in literature. Wherever simple language is charged with noble feeling, stirs the imagination, is directed by steady and comprehensive thought, is adapted to actuate the will in the direction of social and individual good, and is concise and pregnant, Biblical style is approximated, and very probably Biblical influence is dominant.

Finally, the English Bible is the chief bond which holds united, in a common loyalty and a common endeavor, the various branches of the English race. The influence of the Bible can be traced

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through the whole course of English literature and English civilization, and, more than anything else, it tends to give unity and perpetuity to both.

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